

Why recess before lunch?

- Students waste less food.
- Students consume more food and nutrients.
- Students behave better on the playground, in the cafeteria, and in the classroom.
- Students eat at a more leisurely pace because the cafeteria atmosphere is more relaxed.
- Students are more ready to learn upon returning to the classroom immediately after lunch so less instructional time is lost.
- The students perform better in the classroom because of increased nutrient intake and focused attention.



Why do students eat better when recess is before lunch?

Students who go to recess after lunch are often thinking ahead to recess and rush to finish their lunch rather than taking the time to eat a well-balanced meal. When students go to lunch before recess, the National Food Service Management Institute notes, “The lunch [these students] do consume tends to consist of high-protein and high-fat foods, such as the entrée. If students have already participated in recess, they still eat their entrée, but will also eat more foods containing calcium and vitamins, such as milk, vegetables, and fruits” (“Insight,” Spring 2004).

How can your school make the change?

- Inform school faculty and staff, parents, students, and the community of the reasons for the change in order to build support.
- Realize that change takes time and effort and the first try may not work out. Don’t worry, adjustments can always be made.
- Develop routines for the following if you do not already have them in place:



Hand washing



Going to recess, coming in from recess and going to lunch, and going from the lunchroom back to the classroom



Getting sack lunches



Submitting lunch money

- Practice your new routine so everyone knows what to do and when to do it.
- Schedule adequate time (25-30 minutes) for students to eat.
- Be committed, even through a trial period, to stick with it.
- Anticipate some resistance from school faculty and staff, parents, students, and the community.

For more information on recess before lunch, visit...

- http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/meal_recess_report.pdf
- <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/Newsletters/insight24.pdf>
- <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/Newsletters/insight9.pdf>
- <http://www.nfsmi.org/Information/unpublished-research-2002-2004.pdf>
- <http://www.opi.state.mt.us/school food/recessBL.html>
- <https://fns.state.mn.us/Strategic Plan/PDF/ToolKit/RecessBefore Lunch.pdf>
- http://www.nutritionexplorations.org/pdf/sfs/scheduling_recess.pdf
- http://www.educationworld.com/a_admin/admin/admin389.shtml





... about Recess before Lunch

Schools should schedule recess before lunch for elementary grades so that children will come to lunch less distracted and ready to eat. Physical activity before lunch also encourages nutrient intake.

An NFSMI study found that when recess was before lunch, students...

- Ate **24%** more food by weight.
- Wasted **30%** less food by weight.
- Ate **8%** more calories.
- Consumed **35%** more calcium.
- Consumed **13%** more vitamin A.

The National Food Service Management Institute. "Relationships of Meal and Recess Schedules to Plate Waste in Elementary Schools." 2003.

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For more information about creating a healthier classroom, visit...

- <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp>
- <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/schoolhealth/index.asp>
- <http://doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/nutrition/index.asp>
- <http://www.healthysd.gov/>



Child and Adult Nutrition Services

South Dakota Department of Education
800 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501-2235
Phone: (605) 773-3413
Fax: (605) 773-6846
doe.sd.gov/oess/cans/index.asp

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The Benefits of Recess before Lunch

Creating a Healthier Classroom